



NEWS RELEASE

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Santa Teresa agents seize record marijuana load

Two Suspected Smugglers Arrested, 250 Pot Bundles and Firearm Among the Cache

Agents from Santa Teresa, New Mexico, seized 3,331 pounds of marijuana late yesterday, Dec. 19, in two vehicles traveling on New Mexico Highway 9, arrested two subjects from Mexico, and recovered a firearm and a stash of electronic equipment.

The episode unfolded before 8:00 p.m. Thursday as agents responded to the presence of two utility trucks in a notorious smuggling area about 40 miles west of the Santa Teresa Border Patrol Station. Agents began following the vehicle and effected a traffic stop on a 1991 Ford F-350 truck. As the agents approached the truck, they could smell the odor of burning plants, which suggested the truck might have driven off the road. The agent then saw several wrapped bundles through the window behind the seat of the truck. A 37-year-old Mexican National from the state of Zacatecas was taken into custody in connection with the seizure.

Agents then put out an alert on the second truck that was traveling with the F-350. It was located shortly thereafter on Highway 9. As agents approached that truck, a Chevrolet 3500 utility vehicle, it sped away. A short time later, agents discovered that the driver had lost control of the vehicle about 300 yards south of Highway 9. Agents converged on the scene and found the driver, a 24-year-old Mexican National from Chihuahua. Footprints from the truck led agents to a Ruger 40-mm handgun that had been discarded in the bushes about 10 feet away from the truck.

In all, agents recovered 250 bundles of marijuana, one handgun, two Motorola radios, a cellular phone and an electronic scale, presumably for weighing the contraband. Agents were surprised at the labor involved in hiding the bundles of marijuana in every conceivable vehicle compartment. The case was turned over to the Drug Enforcement Administration (DEA) in Las Cruces for prosecution.

According to records, this is the single largest marijuana seizure since the year 2000.

Agents at the Santa Teresa Station have made a total of 16 drug seizures since Oct. 1, the start of the new fiscal year. The estimated value of those seizures is estimated at \$7.2 million.

~ USBP ~